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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amconsgen, Lagos, Nigeria

301 DESPATCH NO. | Feb. 25, 1952 DATE

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. MESSAGE CENTER AIR POUCH PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: Fortnightly Newsletter - February 11 - February 23, 1952

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INFO

SUMMARY

Nothing of special importance happened during the past two-week period. All of the regional legislatures are holding their budget sessions, looking toward a similar session in the central House of Representatives in early March. The budget work of the regional legislatures is their first major business since the Macpherson constitution came into force.

POLITICAL

Legislative Climax

The long and interesting process of taking over of responsibility for the Government of the country by the chosen representatives of the people reached its grand climax during the past few weeks. The cabinet of the nation, the Council of Ministers has already met, as has the new House of Representatives, and the regional houses are now in session. The Governor's Privy Council has also been formed. Now the various bodies are "settling in", and each member of them has been made to realize the importance of making a success of them under the new constitution. Native Nigerians now have much more power and authority than ever before, and this has had a sobering influence among native leaders who know they must not fail in this extension of greater self government.

The members are now reflecting on the tremendous work ahead if the great experiment is to be successful. To many Africans it is quite a new sensation really to be "in the saddle" directing affairs, rather than acting on the outside solely as critics of the Government. The rest of Africa, in particular, has all eyes on Nigeria critically watching to see what they will make of the new experiment.

The hope among Nigerians seems to be general that a decided success will be registered, and thus be the beginning of a greater assumption of power.

In the new Parliament there are accredited representatives of all of the major tribes sitting down together to evolve the best possible plans for goverr ent of the country. Here the

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unifying influence of the new constitution is clearly shown.

Interesting Facts on Nigeria's New Rulers. Curious Political Anomaly.

The average age of Ministers is just over 40.

The twelve Ministers are a good cross section of Nigeria's middle and upper classes.

The Council of Ministers is composed as follows: Two native rulers, four barristers, two education officers, one treasurer, one physician, and two university teachers. All have travelled abroad, and seven have educational decrees from schools in Britain. The Council includes three Yorubas, two Ibos, two Fulanis, one Kanuri, one Hausa, one Bakineri, one Itsekiri, and one Yokurr.

Mr. Awolowo is, in effect, "Leader of the House" as he controls the Western delegation, and since the large Northern delegation (68 members) has declared for cooperation with the Action Group. The constitution treats all members as equals, and does not provide for a "Leader of Government Business", but Awolowo can just about function in that capacity.

The constitution allows a curious anomaly, in that regions and not political parties, are supposed to be represented in the central Council of Ministers and in the House of Representatives. Little attention was paid to the place of parties, in political life. Even the seating is by regions, rather than parties, which causes a conflict between regional and party representation.

Membership and Functions of Newly Appointed Privy Council to the Governor.

The membership of the Privy Council are: The Chief Secretary to the Government, the three Lieutenant-Governors, the Attorney-General, the Inspector General of Medical Services, the Administrator of the Colony, and a special member. The Council has no legislative or administrative functions. It advises the Governor on whether or not to give assent to private bills intended to affect or benefit some particular person, association or corporate body.

Proclamation of Accession Read in Nigeria.

The proclamation of accession to the throne of Princess Elizabeth was read by the Chief Secretary, as the Governor's deputy, on February 9, 1952, in Lagos.

Funds to be Raised to Combat Communism.

It is reported here that a fund of £250,000 is to be raised among trade unions in England and other democracies to combat

communism in West Africa. Evidently the fund will be controlled and directed by the IFFTU with headquarters in Accra. The British TUC is said to have agreed to contribute £100,000 towards the fund.

Action Group Leader Makes Maiden Speech in Western House; Promises Reveal Program Later.

Honorable Obafemi Awolowo, Minister of Local Government in the Western House, made his maiden speech, on the budget, on February 20, and promised that his party would announce the specific details of its program next June.

Ministers Favor Abolition of Government Departments.

The Ministers of Labor and Communications have gone on record as favoring the scrapping of the present Public Relations Department and the Public Works Department. These feelings were recorded at the recent budget meeting of the Western House. They feel (1) that they should deal directly with the press, and (2) that the Public Works Department is only an intermediary between Government and private contractors.

Zik's New Role as Critic of Government.

As earlier predicted, Zik is emerging as critic of the Government, generally, and leader of the opposition in the Western House, where the Action Group has a majority. He can criticize the Central Government freely as he is not a member of the House of Representatives nor a Minister.

In the Western House there was passed a bill to pay regional ministers with portfolios £2000 per annum. Zik's reaction to this was that Ministers are servants of the people and should not drain taxpayers' pockets. He said, "We should serve for the glory of serving."

ECONOMIC

Regional Production Boards and British Rubber Companies to Attempt Improvement of Nigerian Rubber.

It has been announced that the Western and the Eastern Regional Production Boards and certain British rubber companies are planning a joint project calculated to improve the heretofore poor quality of Nigerian rubber. The project is to start with a pilot plant to be erected in Warri or Benin provinces to teach more efficient and standardized methods of processing crude rubber under tutelage of British technicians from Malaya. It is also hoped to encourage the Nigerian ruber gatherer to begin plantations rather than depending upon wild rubber trees. Nigeria has suffered steadily since World War II from her inability to match the quality of

other nations' international rubber offerings and this project is to be one answer to the problem.

The names of the British companies involved and further details of the projects will be reported when full announcement is made.

New VHF Radio-Telegraph Link Planned.

Funds have been made available by the Northern Ministry of Works and Communications for another section of the Very High Frequency radio-telegraph communication system which is slowly being developed in Nigeria. Sites for the VHF towers are now being surveyed between Lokoja and Okene. Telegraph communication for these towns, a scant fifty air miles apart, now take as much as five days to reach their destinations.

Colonial Development and Welfare Allocates £47,000 for New Road.

About two more years will be needed to complete an all-weather road between Yola, in the British Cameroons, and Gombe, Nigeria for which £47,000 has been made available. Until this road is completed the semi-isolation of the area around Yola will persist, as the present single road cannot be used at all during most of the rainy season.

Eastern Regional Development Board Acquires 2,000 Acres for Cashew Nut Development.

The Board has concluded arrangements with the Eziagu Clan to obtain 2,000 acres of new land for clearing and planting in cashew nuts in the East. The Ajalli Cashew Industry, as the project is to be called, will plant approximately 120,000 trees and operate the cropping and processing of the nuts with modern equipment.

Socony-Vacuum Has Received Six Tank Barges for River Transport of Petroleum.

Six 200-ton barges of a planned total of eight have arrived in Nigeria to be placed in service hauling petroleum products to the interior from Lagos for Socony-Vacuum Oil Company. These tank barges are to replace the present drum-laden barges on the trip from Lagos through the lagoons, up the Niger and Benue Rivers as far as Garua in the French Cameroons. It is planned that the "barge trains" will make the trip, over 2500 miles one way, three times each year. The barges will be owned by SVOC and pushed by diesel tugs operated by the United Africa Company.

It is anticipated that these tankers will not only make petroleum products cheaper in the interior but also help to alleviate the frequent occurrence of shortages up-country. Experience gained by one of SVOC's English managers on a trip to the United States last

year will be put into use on this scheme, which is based upon Mississippi River techniques.

Nigerian Cocoa Production.

Nigeria now produces 13.9 per cent of the world's supply of cocoa, according to the new Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Western House, while the Gold Coast produces 34.5 per cent.

Proposed Economic Exploitation of the Colonies.

Fairly widely published here has been an account of what purports to have been a secret plan of colonial offficials in London to interest American capitalists in developing the colonies to get Britain out of the "red". In a recent speech of the Secretary of State for the colonies on the subject of colony development, the secretary said that loans would be needed from the International Bank to finance exploitation.

LABOR

Views of New Minister of Labor on Trade Union Movement.

In one of his first public statements the new Minister of Labor emphasized his anxiety to see strong, responsible trade unions playing an important part in the development of Nigeria. Such activity has been and still is pretty much in the doldrums. Many of the unions are not functioning at all, and many have existed in name only. One of the reasons is the lack of capable, honest leaders who have the welfare of the masses in mind. There are few unions here which can maintain their members or compensate such of them who may suffer as a result of strike or some untoward occurrence.

Effectiveness of Annual General Conference at Enugu Colliery Jeopardize

There is some concern among the workers and management for the effectiveness of the Annual General Conference to be held in March in the Enugu colliery as the result of an internal squabble in the Nigerian Coal Miners' Union. The legitimate Executive Committee of the union has lost its' following almost completely and has been supplanted by a so-called Working Committee led by a union official previously dismissed from the union by the Executive Committee. In a recent plebiscite the extra-legal committee received approval of 88 per cent of the union's membership, leaving the Colliery Management in a position where it can legally bargain only with the now-unpopular Executive Committee unless a solution is found before the annual conference.

OTHER

Scholarships to be Awarded by Western Government.

The Government of the Western Region has announced that it will award 200 scholarships for study abroad in 1952-53 at a cost of some £80,000. These were proposed by the Action Group. The first group of students should leave Nigeria by Octob .

The stated reason for awarding these scholarships is to produce local experts to the end that expensive British personnel will not be required. The Westerners feel that if they can prove their fitness for home rule, that will bring them nearer to self-government.

Representative of World Youths Visits Enugu.

Mr. T. B. Lawson, Representative of the World Assembly of Youths, sent out to Nigeria by the British National Committee of the organization, held a meeting with the representatives of the Enugu Divisional Union at the Union's Hall, Enugu, recently.

He was accompanied by Mr. E. R. Chadwick, Community Development Officer, Eastern Region.

Mr. Lawson explained the aims and objects of the World Assembly of Youths. The organization, he said, has planned to hold a conference at Dakar in West Africa next year, and he hoped that Nigeria would be represented at the conference. Gold Coast and Sierra Leone were represented at tthe similar conference held in America last year, he revealed.

Mr. England Now News Editor Nigerian Broadcasting Service.

Normand England who arrived in Lagos from the United Kingdom on February 1 has now taken charge of the News Section of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. Mr. England first came to Nigeria in April, 1950, as Assistant Editor of the Nigerian Citizen. For some months before he went on leave he was Acting Editor of the Citizen. While on leave in the UK, Mr. England attended a staff training course with the BBC and also spent some time in the BBC's overseas news and talks departments.

Zik May Not Attend Conference in U.S.A.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Federal President of the NCNC, told the USIE Officer recently that he may not be able to attend and speak at an international Fellowship Commission Dinner in Philadelphia March 5. If so, Dr. Azikiwe said he will send Dr. Eyo Eta, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources for the Eastern Region and NCNC leader in the Central House of Representatives.

The invitation, tendered Dr. Azikiwe by President Horace Bond of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, has also gone out to Former Prime Minister Clement Attlee of the UK, Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Madam Anna Figueroa, feminist leader of Chile, and Associate Justice R.H. Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court.

A. W. Childs
Consul General

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